

A<sup>2</sup>  
CONT flexible tube for an endoscope is also required to have satisfactory rotational followability. ---

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1 and 15.

Please amend claims 2, 11, 13, 14, 18-20, 22 and 29 as follows (A "marked up" copy of these claims is provided as an attachment to this Reply):

A<sup>3</sup> 2. (Once Amended - Clean Text) A flexible tube for an endoscope, comprising:  
an elongated tubular core body; and  
an outer cover which is provided over the core body, the outer cover having a portion which is formed into a laminate structure composed of at least three layers, (the 2 layers of the laminate structure including an inner layer, an outer layer and at least one intermediate layer formed between the inner layer and the outer layer) (wherein the 12 intermediate layer of the outer cover has a higher elasticity than the inner and outer layers) (so that the intermediate layer functions as cushioning between the inner layer and the outer layer.) 15

A4 11. (Once Amended - Clean Text) The flexible tube as claimed in Claim 2,  
wherein the outer layer of the outer cover contains a material having resistance to a  
chemical.

AS 13. (Once Amended - Clean Text) The flexible tube as claimed in Claim 2,  
wherein the outer layer of the outer cover is formed of a material having higher hardness  
than that of the inner layer or the intermediate layer.

14. (Once Amended - Clean Text) The flexible tube as claimed in Claim 2,  
wherein at least a part of the outer layer of the outer cover has higher hardness than that  
of the inner layer or the intermediate layer.

AC 18. (Once Amended - Clean Text) The flexible tube as claimed in Claim 2,  
wherein the outer cover is provided over the core body through an extrusion molding  
process.

19. (Once Amended - Clean Text) The flexible tube as claimed in Claim 2,  
wherein the flexible tube has tip and base ends, and flexibility of the flexible tube  
increases in a gradual or stepwise manner along the direction from the base end toward

the tip end.

A6  
CONT 20. (Once Amended - Clean Text) The flexible tube as claimed in Claim 2,  
wherein any one of the layers constituting the portion of the laminate structure of the  
outer cover is different from one of the other layers in its physical property and/or  
chemical property.

A7 22. (Once Amended - Clean Text) The flexible tube as claimed in Claim 2,  
wherein at least one of the layers constituting the portion of the laminate structure has a  
thickness-varying region where the thickness of the layer varies in its longitudinal  
direction.

A8 29. (Once Amended - Clean Text) The flexible tube as claimed in Claim 2,  
wherein at least one of the layers constituting the portion of the laminate structure has at  
least two regions and at least one boundary part along its longitudinal direction, and one  
of the regions is contiguous to the other region through the boundary part, in which one of  
the regions is different from the other regions adjacent thereto in its physical property  
and/or chemical property.